

Prof. Theodore V. Buttrey

7 April 1995

[REDACTED]

Dear Ted:

Your 28 March 1995 letter was most welcome. Research isn't easy of pieces of others.

As to the western American bars in the Red Book I telephoned Bressett and he assured me that they are from the Central America and that none of them bear any resemblance to the bars which first appeared in the 1960 era.

If someone on the salvage ship over the Central America site secretly drops a Mexican gold bar overboard I presume it will be found. Only then will you have a truly sinking feeling.



My grandson Anthony Newman is at Wolfson in Oxford getting his Masters in Philosophy and he is enthralled.

Sincerely,

Eric P. Newman

Mr. Theodore V. Buttrey
9 February 1996
Fitz William Museum
Cambridge CB2 1RB
United Kingdom

Dear Ted:

Supplementing the prior report to you there is sent to you herewith our observations on the brass and copper strikings of the \$20 1853 US Assay Office pieces. They are unlisted. They are definitely from transfer dies by virtue of the extra lump which arose during the transfer. The original dies were cut by George Albert Ferdinand Kuner who came to California in 1849 and died there in January 1906, just three months before the earthquake. He did metallic art work all of his working life. He could have had the US Assay Office dies in his possession when he died or perhaps he had turned them over to the San Francisco Mint previously. In any event the original dies (which I believe were still in San Francisco in 1906) and the transfer dies were sent to the Philadelphia Mint or else there is no way Nagy could have obtained them. Nagy had a store in Philadelphia on 18th street selling autographs, cards, coins, documents, etc. and I will soon get an advertisement of that store. Through the pull of his relative John Haseltine at the Mint, Nagy and Haseltine could get all kinds of things and even have work done there with "unofficial" material like private California coin dies (The US Assay Office was privately owned). So Nagy could have fiddled with original or transfer dies. When he died his accumulation included things acquired from the Mint, probably as junk. It was the coin related items which were sold by the Nagy Estate to Merkin or friends of Merkin and then given to the Smithsonian on the 50 year "don't open" deal. Naturally there was a tax deduction angle. Dave Bowers is trying to find out from Hodder what was in the gift as Hodder says he knows. I will advise you promptly if he does. Things could easily have been borrowed temporarily before the gift. Number and letter punches could certainly have been siphoned off. The reason for the gift was to give back to the government things which belonged to the government and to delay the examination of them until those involved in liberating them were no longer subject to embarrassment during their lives.

If you need anything further please feel free to ask.

Hopefully this may be helpful.

My best,

Eric P. Newman

Theodore V. Buttrey, Jr.
Air Mail
Fitzwilliam Museum
8 April 1996
Cambridge CB2 1RB
United Kingdom

Dear Ted:

Unfortunately I was not present at your talk at ANS on March 16, 1996 but received the content soon thereafter. I feel that it might be helpful if I share some of my thoughts about it with you. I realize how much work and thought you put into the subject over the years and that is evident in what you presented. Naturally, I was "all ears".

- p. 1. The subtitle "Western gold coins" might be clearer if changed to "Private gold coins of western United States".
- p. 1, line 6. Due to the small amount of silver found in the gold rush and its insignificance to your subject you might wish to eliminate "and silver".
- p. 1, line 18. Perhaps you should include the name of Edgar H. Adams here as he was the first numismatic compiler and rework footnote 4 which includes him.
- p. 3, line 7. Adams should be John W. Adams to avoid any confusion with Edgar H. Adams.
- p. 3, line 16. Instead of "Some years ago I published a " I suggest "In 1973 there was published my". This is more specific.
- p. 3, line 22©23. "is proven" instead of "can be proved".
- p. 3, line 24. "in the 1950s" might be added and the source matter eliminated. Footnote 6 should then be omitted as too inflammatory.
- p. 4, line 11. "speculation" rather than "fictitious" seems better.
- p. 4, line 27. "Who made the bars is not known" should be eliminated. It may be or is known by some.
- p. 4, line 28. add "auctioned or" in front of "sold".
- Footnote 9. Christie's Sale took place before the Vince Newman article.
- p. 5. The Hodder comment to the editor of the Numismatic Circular in 1990 should be mentioned and commented on. I do not understand what conclusion it comes to as it didn't measure trace elements. It apparently did create some difference of opinion.
- p. 5. You might also add that no one to your knowledge has written an opinion contrary to your findings relative to the wrong crown design if that is the case. Breen apparently wrote something challenging your position but it was not published so far as I remember. You should carefully check this matter.
- p. 6, line 5 & 6. The word "new" can be confusing. You use "previously unknown" and you might stick to that.
- p. 6, line 9. The words "There is not room here" gives the wrong impression. Perhaps you should list all of the names somewhere, but if you do, you risk contradiction if even one name on a bar turns up in a newspaper description, article, treasure find, etc. Incidentally you repeat the names you do use in a later part of the talk and might eliminate that.

- p. 6, line 22. perhaps "contained the apparent imprint of "instead of "were signed by" would be more precise.
- p. 6, line 26. Elimination of the sentence beginning with "All" as this seems quite inflammatory.
- p. 7. As you know a Franklin hoard piece alleged to be a proof was the subject of a PNG arbitration in the 1960s in which the arbitrators unanimously determined the piece was not a proof. A similar piece was declared to be a fake by ANA Authentication Bureau and published in the February 1994 Numismatist, p. 290. These might be mentioned.

As to Section III beginning on page 5 there are a number of general inquiries which an interested person could raise and which I believe should be further investigated. There are also other points which should be looked into.

1. It is important to check everything possible to determine if any western bars are mentioned before 1950 other than Humbert and Moffat.
2. It is important to write the Central America Group and ask them if there are any other private bar makers on the material they have found other than those listed in the Guidebook for 1994, 1995 and 1996 (pagination differs in each edition). The Guidebook entries should be included in any event. Even though the Central America Group may be reluctant to give most data early they probably would give this minor information as they did for the Guidebook and for magazine.
3. You need pictures and this is a very complex matter. I believe a formal written request to the Smithsonian Institution is necessary to ask for copies of pictures of all of its private gold bars and copies of such information as they have in their records with respect to the pieces. You should offer to pay for the copies of the pictures. Informal requests are not enough. You are vulnerable to criticism and challenge if you do not write. Whether you will receive a satisfactory response or not is another matter, but they are supposed to be a museum to help furnish knowledge to the public. In this letter to Smithsonian you may or may not wish to ask if it received a gift or gifts about 25-30 years ago which is not to be opened until 50 years have elapsed. Although that matter may be related to the gold bars Smithsonian will theoretically have no way of knowing what is in the gift or gifts. Perhaps to avoid too much of a shock the request for copies of the pictures and data might come first and after a Smithsonian reply or sufficient time for a reply the gift inquiry could come at a later date.
4. You might write the Bank of California for a picture of its \$200 slug. They had it on exhibit for years and it may still be there. I am sure the bank has a picture. It is in Encyclopedia Britannica as you know.
5. It is important to check whether after 1950 and before the Central America find there is any bar located or mentioned which was of a type found in the Central America or any other variety not previously known.
6. You do not mention the inclusion of some private gold ingots or bars in the Guidebook over 25 years ago and in due course removed from the Guidebook. If I can find my notes on this in my boxes of files on the matter I can send them to you if you wish.
7. I wonder if in the restricted collection of pioneer gold you know about there are any gold bars allegedly stamped by assayers which are not included in the Lilly, Gibson, Central America etc. groups.

This letter is too long already but it is of such importance to be accurate on such a difficult subject that I want you to have these thoughts promptly. I will think about the matter further and will probably make more suggestions. This is in no way to be interpreted as other than friendly and in your best interests. I am trying to look at the problem from the point of view of an uninformed intelligent person studying the matter for the first time.

Again congratulations on the Huntington Medal.

Sincerely,

Eric P. Newman

cc: American Numismatic Society

Mr. Theodore V. Buttrey, Jr.

16 April 1996

Fitzwilliam Museum

Cambridge CB2 1RB

United Kingdom

Dear Ted:

I thank you for the new charts on your Western gold coin and bar matter, marked Figures 1, 2, and 3. They are very revealing. Figure 1 covers the earliest appearance of the coin producing firms and since there are so few following the 1850s decade I wonder if you should be specific as to their names. I think that might be helpful. You even might wish to name all of the coin producers. Figures 1 and 3 might be clarified so that the words "Earliest appearance" may include write-ups and discoveries as well as auction items if that is intended.

The distinction between a coin and a bar might be included as there are circular gold objects which appeared for the first time after mid-twentieth century. I presume you have not yet received my 8 April 1996 letter to Cambridge because your charts were sent to me from the USA.

Please keep me up to date as to modifications.

Sincerely,

Eric P. Newman

cc: American Numismatic Society

Prof. Theodore V. Buttrey

8 April 1997

[REDACTED]

Dear Ted:

Prior to the receipt of your 28 March 1997 answer to my letter I had been thinking about the Western gold bar and ingot matter since writing you last month and have a few additional comments.

You state (Notes 22 and 23) that the Lilly Collection and the Clifford Collection each seem to have a Justh & Hunter bar. The Clifford piece is illustrated in his pamphlet. There are several of these bars illustrated in the Central America group in the Life illustration. Have the stampings been compared? Perhaps you have a picture of the Lilly item or could obtain one. I enclose a photocopy of the Clifford illustration. Strangely the Clifford item is not in the Bowers 1982 sale of the Clifford Collection and could have been siphoned off for some reason.

I rechecked the 1943 Numismatic Review article by Joseph Stack with respect to the Hentsch & Berton bar situation. This has a most amazing and shocking coincidence. As Stack noticed and commented upon both bars have the identical serial number (8625).

It said that one had been in New York for a long time and another was at the Wells Fargo Museum in San Francisco. These are the only examples known. What are the odds that two widely separated items would have identical serial numbers. The Stack piece does not have "No." in front of the figures. I enclose photocopies from the publication. Every other bar known whether genuine or false, has its own serial number which cannot be a batch number or mix number because that would be pointless when the fineness was stamped on. They must have entered the serial number and detail in a record book for auditing or taxation or else the serial numbers would not have been used.

Now the plot thickens further. The Wells Fargo bar has a soldered loop and a link on it in the 1943 illustration and the identical piece has no attachment in the 1961 illustration by Clifford (Photocopy enclosed). Where are the bars now? Does Smithsonian have one? Did Wells Fargo have its piece circumsized?

In your 28 March 1997 letter you make a point that the 1851 pioneer coins are in the 1852 E & B publication. The 1849 coins are in the 1850 publication and that is why I tried to improve your point about prompt eastern knowledge.

You noticed the slip up in my letter when I indicated that the Hentsch & Berton bars were in the Guide Book. I meant that a Hentsch bar was in the Guide Book from 1994 onwards. I do not believe Bressett even considered the Henstch & Breton matter at all.

I am glad you had the Vince Newman correspondence. I didn't know about it until Peter Gaspar was kind enough to give me copies.

Harvey is quite concerned about this matter because his firm sold Lilly many items with the great secrecy required by Lilly and they ended up in the Smithsonian. He probably didn't think anything was wrong with them when he sold them but learned what others thought later. Then he went on the defensive.

Please tell me what you think of all this.

Sincerely,

Eric P. Newman

Prof. Theodore V. Buttrey

22 April 1997

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Dear Ted:

I received your 15 April 1997 letter.

A new book by Q. David Bowers just came out. Its title is American Coin Treasures and Hoards. It has much on the Central America and much on our favorite Pioneer Gold hoards. I had a copy sent to you and you will definitely want to read the applicable portions in detail.

It states that bar numbers are serial numbers and not batch numbers.

Is George A. Berton a descendant of the Berton of Hentsch and Berton bars?

My fax number is [REDACTED].

Carry on,

Eric P. Newman

Prof. T.V. Buttrey

January 27, 1998



Dear Ted:

Your offer of off prints of your current American Journal of Numismatics article is appreciated and if you would autograph and send six (6) that would be welcome. Peter Gaspar will get one from us as well as others.

In the article by Elizabeth M. Nuxoll placed just prior to your article and entitled "The Robert Morris Papers Project" it is mentioned on page 58, line 5 that Ford and I both tried to be of help to that project over 25 years ago. Offering help to ANS and to you for your article is just an extension of that practice on our part. What was furnished to you by Ford, directly and indirectly and used for your article speaks for itself. Isn't that juxtaposition an odd coincidence ?

With the usual repairs for substantial age maturity I am fine and I thank you for inquiring.

My best,

Eric P. Newman

Prof. Ted Buttrey

March 4, 1998

Dear Ted:

Your article in AJN No. 9 seems to have stimulated extra readership.

I have just received a letter dated February 26, 1998 from Kenneth Bressett asking me to forward a copy to you. He sent a blind copy of his letter for that purpose including three pages of exhibits. These are enclosed.

As a matter of courtesy we will ask him if we can make and send an additional copy to ANS.

He includes a teaser in offering to show me and give me copies of 1965 material which he found recently in going over Red Book files. The reason for his delay is illusive, but we are both going to teach a numismatic course in Colorado Springs in July 1998 at the week long annual ANA Summer Seminar. He underlined the word very, as you see, to give me anticipatory goose bumps.

When your signed offprints are received he will be sent one.

The motto which should have been stamped upon Western American gold bars is INGOT WE TRUST

Sincerely,

Eric P. Newman

cc: Kenneth Bressett
P.O. Box 60145
Colorado Springs, CO 80960

Theodore V. Buttrey

June 4, 1998

[REDACTED]

Air Mail

Dear Ted:

I recently had a visitor by the name of Lawrence Lee, curator of the Byron Reed Numismatic Collection in Omaha, Nebraska. He mentioned an article he wrote for the June 1997 Numismatist, a copy of which is enclosed. I was unaware of it and realized that you might be similarly unaware.

It should be of great interest to you that Conway transfer dies were openly made in or just prior to 1956 for the Denver Mint celebration from seven genuine Conway dies legitimately held by the Colorado Historical Society. Souvenir pieces in goldine were struck from the transfer dies and distributed.

By a twist of fate Franklin found an additional Conway die and a gold coin overstrike from it in an unidentified New Mexico antique shop which obtained them from another New Mexico site along with many U.S. gold coins in a burned out unidentified building on an unrecorded date. Ford obtained the die and coin from Franklin in an undocumented transaction and in 1957 (the year after the Denver celebration) sold the coin to Henry Clifford of California. The antique shop find was said to be 1955 so it appears that 2 years elapsed between the finding and the third party sale and those two years straddle the 1956 date of the Denver Mint souvenir delivery.

In the meantime Bashlow tries to have a transfer die made from the antique store die which Ford sold him and also had a special restrike die made up to go with it. Then Ford asserts that the antique store die seems fake. The antique store die happened to collapse along the way and messed up the situation. Your AJN article features the extensive appearance of previously unknown ingots during the same period.

I am going to discuss with Lee some of his conclusions, but in the meantime wanted to have you informed of this article and its sources.

I know you will be in New York in July. I will be at ANS on July 18, 1998 and hope our paths cross.

Ingot we trust,

Eric P. Newman

Subj:
Date: 7/25/00 2:39:00 AM Central Daylight Time
From: [REDACTED] (T.V. Buttrey)
To: [REDACTED] (Bob Leonard)

Many thanks for your good words on the Blake and Agnell bar in E-Sylum. It is such a boost to the spirits to have someone else contributing to the discussion: the Bad Guys of course try to isolate me as an individual nut case, so I am really grateful that you are out there.

You will know that they are trying to sue me down to the ground, but I continue to gather evidence and trust in Providence and my New York lawyer.

Regards,

Ted

----- Headers -----

Return-Path: [REDACTED]
Received: from rly-za03.mx.aol.com (rly-za03.mail.aol.com [172.31.36.99]) by air-za05.mail.aol.com (v75_b1.4) with ESMTP; Tue, 25 Jul 2000 03:39:00 -0400
Received: from red.csi.cam.ac.uk (red.csi.cam.ac.uk [131.111.8.70]) by rly-za03.mx.aol.com (v75.18) with ESMTP; Tue, 25 Jul 2000 03:38:56 -0400
Received: from tvb1 (helo=localhost)
by red.csi.cam.ac.uk with local-esmtp (Exim 3.15 #1)
id 13GzII-0001Bu-00
for [REDACTED]; Tue, 25 Jul 2000 08:38:55 +0100
Date: Tue, 25 Jul 2000 08:38:55 +0100 (BST)
From: "T.V. Buttrey" [REDACTED]
X-Sender: [REDACTED]
To: Bob Leonard [REDACTED]
Message-ID: [REDACTED]
MIME-Version: 1.0
Content-Type: TEXT/PLAIN; charset=US-ASCII